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# America, the Nations and the League

By HON. THOMAS R. MARSHALL

Vice-President of the United States

ONE of the marvels to me has been the absolute inerrancy with which so many men in America were able immediately upon the receipt of the first draft for the proposed League of Nations to announce authoritatively what it would and would not do to the republic.

Having spent three and thirty of the best years of my life in the practice of the law, during which constitutional cases not infrequently arose, I ascertained that a century and a quarter after its adoption by the several states, the American Constitution presented many propositions about which strong arguments could be made on both sides. For six years, as presiding officer of the United States Senate, I have heard this same Constitution lauded and magnified, attacked and defended. Propositions prove to be clearly constitutional and equally unconstitutional until, in the larger, swifter movements of these epoch-making times, I have almost reached the conclusion that what one believes is constitutional and what one disbelieves is unconstitutional.

Without having made a public utterance upon this proposed league, I went to the Salt River Valley of Arizona where, far removed from the shouting and the tumult of the captains, I might bring to bear upon the subject such reason, patriotism and conscience as I possessed.

With those who are opposed to any league of nations, no difference what the terms of its covenant may be, I have no controversy nor do I care to charge them with impure and unpatriotic motives. Much that they say about the ancient glory of the republic appeals to me, both historically and racially. If among the hundred millions of people who now dwell under the supposedly protective folds of the American flag, there be aside from the Indian such a person, racially speaking, as an American citizen, then I am he. On both sides of my house, there does not course in our veins a single drop of blood which was not coursing in the veins of some

man or some woman here in this western continent when Bunker Hill became the highest peak in political geography.

If mere selfishness were to guide my conduct, I would be one of the first to raise the cry, "America for Americans." I am one of the bare half-million of like lineage now living in this land. My blood having fought its way out of English domination under George III could never contemplate skulking back as a prodigal son under George V. And regardless of that sense of loyalty and that personal devotion which I bear to my chief, I would be a last-ditch man in the maintenance of American institutions if I thought or could be convinced that the proposed League of Nations was to make of America a mere appanage of the British Crown. I am, however, convinced that there is a vast deal of difference between going back a prodigal son and going back, as I believe, not as a weakling but as a controlling partner in a great movement looking toward the peace of the world. To say that because I have whipped a man I will never have anything to do with him save to whip him again is primitive. Men learn to forgive—nations should. To say that I will deal only with an ambitious man when he does what I want done is to announce anew the Germanic political philosophy.

I have been pointed to the advice of the Father of the Republic to beware of all entangling alliances with European nations. At first blush it seems to be conclusive of the subject, but the more I consider it the less potency it seems to have in present day affairs. It will not do to construe language other than in the light of the circumstances under which it was uttered. Somewhere in the numerous "Lives" of George Washington, I have read that a gentleman would ride nothing save a good saddle horse. This advice does not seem to have had any effect upon the manufacture, sale and use of motor cars. It must not be forgotten that when Washington uttered his advice the status for peace or war of each nation of Europe was fixed by a small and ruling class. If I were convinced from my reading that the politics of Europe now were the product of the policy of politicians and not of peoples, I should be willing blindly to follow his advice. It is quite easy to assert what a man whose lips are closed in death would say, yet I venture to state that Washington was so great a lover of peace and of democracy that if, without violation of our Consti-

tution, he could today advise an alliance with the democratic peoples of the old world to preserve peace he would do so.

In the revised draft, the Monroe Doctrine has been taken care of. Agitation concerning it was a "tempest in a teapot." There were two conclusions drawn from the Monroe Doctrine, one of which was good for the American people and the other of which was bad. The conclusion that it was the doctrine of self-defense against the aggression of European nations on the western shore was good, but the doctrine conferring upon us a lordship or guardianship of our sister republics to the south was distinctly bad. It wounded the pride of these republics and instead of drawing them toward America it furnished reason for them to listen to the insidious wiles of European diplomacy. When all men pledge their honor to maintaining the integrity of the American republics, it is hardly needful for the United States to assume for itself the discharge of that duty.

This is not a question of what you and I wish were the case; it is a question of what is, and what we are going to do about it. Theoretically, I would quarantine against yellow-fever, but if I found the epidemic raging in America I would not rely upon the quarantine—I would treat the disease.

Stripped of explanatory verbiage and clarified as to non-legal phrases, the objects of the proposed league are to prevent war, promote peace, reduce armaments, control the sale of munitions, abrogate secret treaties, preserve territorial integrity from external aggression, and to help weak and struggling peoples toward the maintenance of democracies.

To attain these objects all disputes which the parties recognize as suitable and which are unsettleable by diplomacy shall be settled by arbitration and in time by a permanent court of international justice; nor shall the parties go to war over any other dispute until after arbitration or recommendation upon the subject.

Enforcement of decrees is to be had by severing financial, commercial and personal relations with the offending state and by recommendation as to actual physical force to be employed.

In the event of disputes, non-member states are to be invited to obey the rules of the league. If the dispute is between a member state and a non-member state, a refusal by the non-member state to obey the rules of the league constitutes an act of war, but as

between non-member states subjects them to such action as the council shall deem necessary to avoid war.

Armament is to be fixed and not increased without permission, and private manufacture of munitions and their sale is to be controlled.

Provision is made for the recording of all treaties before they become effective and the league's power is pledged to the preservation of territorial integrity from external aggression.

I omit the mandatory clause because it is clearly optional and not compulsory, and the labor clause as being simply advisory.

This is in substance the original draft. One serious objection which I had to the original draft has been entirely removed in the revised draft by the inclusion of the right of a state to withdraw. This I think was necessary in accordance with the make-up of human nature. The seventeenth century could not fix the political status of the eighteenth, nor can the twentieth century definitely fix the political status of the twenty-first. The addition was advisable, not on account of objection to the terms of the league, but by reason of the inadvisability and impossibility of one generation speaking definitely as to what the next must do.

No one has yet shown me that there is a single word or sentence in the proposed league that is in derogation of our Constitution or that infringes upon the rights of the Congress of the United States. If there were a definite clause that bound the Congress and the United States to guaranty by force of arms the territorial integrity of any people it might be a valid objection. This objection, however, coming from those who with bland countenances voted to disregard our guarantee of the territorial rights of Columbia in the Panama Canal, does not convince me that the objectors are more patriotic than political in their zeal.

Among all the memorabilia of the war the most remarkable is the letter written by Von Bethmann-Hollweg in 1913. In the course of the letter he makes in substance this somewhat startling statement: "Force has never been able to maintain what force has won." Babylon, Nineveh, Troy, Rome, Berlin—all are covered with the ashes of destiny and defeat. More and more it becomes apparent that thought rules the world and that words and ideas are the only things that live forever. For the maintenance of stable government, it is needful that some men who

advocate violence should be punished, because they are seeking only to impress their ideas by force. We should never forget that we cannot execute an idea nor imprison a thought.

Lover of the old-fashioned neutrality of the American people, I have sought to take a bird's-eye view of my country's history. Some men will be mean enough to say that it is a small bird and a small eye—nevertheless, 'tis mine.

Neutrality cannot be maintained successfully by a lack of resort to physical force. My next-door neighbor and his wife may spend their days and nights in family quarrels. So long as they are nothing to me and to my wife, so long as we do not seek to know the origin of their dispute nor to endeavor to ascertain the right and wrong of it, just so long we are neutral. But if she happens to be my cousin or he happens to be my wife's cousin, or without any relationship whatever we begin to inquire into the origin and right of the controversy, we are no longer neutral. We have developed a neighborhood quarrel.

Now it so happens that a majority of those who are vehemently attacking the proposed league of peace are the authors of that course of conduct which took the American people from their isolated position and set them down in the politics of the world. When we accumulated Hawaii, Porto Rico and the Philippines, our quarantine clause ceased to work. Eliminating also the half million of so-called original Americans, we have opened our gates to every kindred, tribe and tongue on earth. I make no complaint. I have no protest as to their being here, but we were in the European war long before the declaration. We would not listen to our President to keep still about it. We were pro-ally or pro-German in less than a year.

It was inevitable that we should get into the war, for the very soul of America is an intense passion for peace and an intense hatred for wrong. Large numbers of those who are now opposing the League of Nations are the intellectual descendants of those men who characterized the Constitution of the United States as "a covenant with death" and "a league with hell," and who advised to let the erring sisters go in peace. But the soul of America would not let them go in peace.

Disguised as the issue was, it was not loss of territory which caused the destruction of slavery. The Spanish-American war

was not over the sinking of the *Maine*; it was in the cause of human liberty in Cuba. Ostensibly we went to war with Germany for the sinking of the *Lusitania* and other outrages of the sea; in reality, the soul of America had demanded that the world be made safe for democracy.

League or no league, no grave crisis can arise anywhere around the world that this people will not seek to know the facts and to form an opinion upon them, and when their opinion is formed and expressed, the neutrality of the American people is gone. Had the American people had a cohesive thought upon this late war before it began, it is questionable whether it ever would have arisen; and if it had, it speedily would have ended.

I hope the United States will remain on the side of the Allies. I hope our people will always be trained to the idea of justice—not force—as the ruling power of the world. I hope they will ally themselves in some honorable way with like governments around the world so that everyone in America will cease to regret the loss of the German cause and that those who formerly believed in the German theory will begin to train their children in the principles of democracy. If we step back to our isolation we shall have two factions teaching contending theories of government in the country. I prefer to have only one faction and that faction teaching the cause of democracy and justice.

Just one more reason and I have done. I am for this League of Nations in the hope that, having made the world safe for democracy, we can now address ourselves to the task of making democracy safe for the world. He who seeks the peace of the world must compromise between his opinion and public opinion. He must remember Goethe's saying that no government is as bad as no government at all.

This startling thing called bolshevism is as great a menace to democracy as was the German military system. I do not accuse all men who advocate it as being bad men, but I do say they are mistaken men. All my life I have fought the efforts of business to run the machinery of government. I shall certainly raise my protest against the machinery of government being used for the doing of such business as a class of citizens may think ought to be done—all other business to be taboo or destroyed.

Bolshevism may come the world over, but it will be like the

influenza—it may kill its millions, but sooner or later it will pass away. I beg the good men who believe in it to stop and consider. They might ordain that among the feathered tribe of the world only blackbirds should survive and they might exterminate all others, but in some far-off distant year their descendants on a bright October morning would hear the shrill cry of the quail or upon balmy nights listen to the throaty notes of the nightingale. If they are themselves fathers of children they need only look at their own families to realize that, much as they may believe in the political equality of mankind, they cannot produce a social, economic, intellectual and moral quality that will endure. The laws of evolution and the evolutions of God will in due season overrule. To meet this menace the less change there is in constituted authority the better for the world.

Briefly in conclusion, upon the subject of world predomination—if my view coincides with the facts of history—then ideas and aims, not arms or armament, shall rule the world. Take the history of your own, proud people. Read all its glorious past, and answer me—not as partisan, not alone as patriot, geographically speaking, but as a lover of humanity—do you doubt that if our aims continue to be as they have been that the American flag will drape the throne of the nations? That we shall rule the world with a rod of love and in our right hand carry gentle peace to silence envious tongues?